

Iowa Department of Education News Release

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State Board outlines goals for creating 'inclusive schools' for all Iowa students

DES MOINES -- The State Board of Education recently adopted principles designed to encourage inclusive schools in Iowa where diversity and high student performance are top priorities.

"The State Board of Education firmly believes that all students learn more effectively when Iowa's classrooms create a sense of community where all children feel significant and respected," said Corine Hadley, President of the State Board of Education. "We hope local school administrators, teachers, and parents will use these principles as a road map for creating more opportunities for all of Iowa's students."

The State Board will consider proposed policies during the coming school year that support the principles. The accompanying vision paper approved by the State Board – entitled "Envisioning Inclusive Communities and Schools for the 21st Century" – will be disseminated across the state to share the Board's vision on diversity in schools and communities.

"As Iowans, our goal must be to ensure that all Iowa children attend schools that are inclusive and welcoming to students, and that our schools provide the opportunity for all students to reach their full potential," said Ted Stilwill, Director of the Iowa Department of Education.

The 16 principles and vision paper adopted by the State Board are designed to encourage schools and communities to "continuously strive to become welcoming and supportive living and learning environments for all their citizens, regardless of their gender, race, national origin, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Those efforts will help insure that all Iowans achieve their full potential as contributing citizens of their local community, the State of Iowa, the United States, and the world."

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The report concludes that Iowans **“must constantly strive to close the gap that exists between the reality in our communities and this vision of inclusive schools and communities.”**

Hadley added: “It is the State Board’s intent that these policies will result in a more welcoming and supportive learning environment for students in all Iowa classrooms, highest levels of academic achievement for all students, and greater respect for diversity.”

After the State Board began reviewing its policies on school integration and diversity in 1998, the Board and the Iowa Department of Education began developing the guiding principles currently being released to schools – as well as forthcoming policy changes.

In addition to reviewing the historical perspective on school desegregation in Iowa, the Board sponsored seven community conversations across Iowa in 1999. The conversations focused on encouraging community discussions on diversity and integration issues, as well as providing ideas and insights for the State Board of Education.

With input from the State Advisory Committee on Educational Equity, the Department of Education staff examined the summary of the community conversations to develop the current set of principles. These ideas will form the foundation for future state policy intended to create inclusive schools and communities in Iowa.

For more information, contact Tom Andersen at 515-281-8170 or Mary Sullivan at 515-281-5471; or visit the Department of Education’s website at www.state.ia.us/educate/.